Minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 March 2016

Those attending:
Professor Sir D Baulcombe FRS
Dr N Brewis
Dr B Clarke
Professor R Cogdell FRS
Professor M Dallman OBE
Professor C Goble CBE
Dr M Goosey
Mr D Gregory (Chair of the meeting)
Professor S Gurr
Dr D Keith
Professor J Petts CBE
Professor D Richardson
Professor H Sang (except for Item 6)
Professor M Welham (BBSRC Chief Executive and Deputy Chair)

Also attending:
Professor I Boyd (Defra Observer) (Items 1-5)
Dr P Burrows
Dr Amanda Collis
Ms R Endean (BIS Representative)
Mr P Gemmill
Ms J Juillerat
Dr Karen Lewis
Miss H Meade (Secretary)
Dr Colin Miles (Item 10 only)
Mr D Parfrey
Mrs S Southwood
Mr S Visscher CBE

ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS (ORAL)

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies received from Professor Sir Gordon Duff.

3. The Chair acknowledged that this was Melanie Welham’s first meeting as BBSRC interim Chief Executive and welcomed her in her new role. Council were delighted with her appointment and offered their full support. The Chair also acknowledged that this was Dr Amanda Collis and Dr Karen Lewis’ first meeting as BBSRC interim Executive Director of Science and Innovation and Skills respectively.

4. The Chair acknowledged that this was David Baulcombe’s and David Richardson’s last meeting as members of Council.
   - David Richardson has served on Council for four years, and taken on a number of additional roles whilst also taking on, initially on an interim basis and then permanently, the relaxing role of Vice Chancellor of UEA. David played a key part in creating what is a successful Council today.
item 2: minutes of the council meeting held on 04 december (bbsrc 02/2016)

minutes of the extra council meeting held on 22 february (bbsrc 03/2016)

5. minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

item 3: matters arising (oral)

6. council discussed the need to be clearly visible in the research community at both universities and institutes across the uk. this is especially important as research councils move towards research uk. action: bbsrc to ask rcuk to develop a cross-council communication plan to ensure there is consistent messaging from all research councils around the move to ruk.

item 4: chair’s business and chief executive’s report (bbsrc 04/2016)

7. the chief executive reflected on her first three weeks in her new post, emphasizing the huge support that she has received from bbsrc colleagues.

8. the chief executive highlighted the following points:
   - bioscience has huge potential for research in the uk and bbsrc must maintain a focus on supporting world-class bioscience.
   - bbsrc needs to be agile, resilient and clear about its priorities.
   - bbsrc will consider its internal capabilities and its future vision, in thinking about positioning for ruk.
   - examples of recent science impact stories were presented, stressing the wide breadth of science that bbsrc funds and the power of partnerships.
   - bbsrc remains well connected in this time of change by maintaining good collaborations with other research councils and government organisations. greater collaborative working was needed now more than ever.

9. council praised bbsrc’s excellent media and communication team, the merger of digital and press teams seen as a positive change.
ITEM 5: UPDATE FROM BIS/DEFRA/DFID (ORAL)

10. Ian Boyd (Defra) updated Council on the following:
   
   - Defra is restructuring.
   - Defra has carried out a review of ‘what Defra will need/look like in the future’.
   - Alignment of Defra with research councils is vital, for example through Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and official development assistance (ODA), priority areas.
   - Development of a multi-year business plan for science across Defra is underway. **ACTION: Defra to share draft business plan with BBSRC to ensure continued alignment.**
   - Two 25-year plans are under development one around food and farming, and one on the environment. These will be very high level, underpinned by science and emphasise Ministers’ desire for long-term strategies. The plans will incorporate skills (training and educating farmers), that were currently picked up under apprenticeships.
   - Defra will be driving open data and consequently look to build tools to help accessibility of the metadata. This is a huge opportunity for the research community, particularly to drive business growth and policy in government and essential for precision agriculture. This is also an opportunity to join up in relation to Whitehall capability in earth observation. Agritech East has been working with Defra to ensure end user engagement.
   - Machine learning could be an interesting area for BBSRC, with potential applications in agriculture. There may be an opportunity for BBSRC to input into a new Foresight project, to fully realise and exploit opportunities from marine biology.

11. Rebecca Endean (BIS) updated Council on the following:
   
   - GCRF has to be aligned with ODA rules and Haldane principles with the primary intent to benefit developing countries.
   - BIS were waiting on the Higher Education bill for parliamentary approval of the Nurse response (expected bill to be announced in the Queen’s Speech on 18 May).
   - BIS announced the closure of the BIS office in Sheffield.
   - Two activities of current ongoing work for efficiency and better working included OCRP (cross-Council programme) and the wider reform agenda to deliver the efficiency challenges from BIS.
   - Science and Innovation audit had launched and had received ~20 proposals.
   - BIS recognised the need to maintain stability of Council members, especially in preparation for RUK.
   - BIS commended BBSRC executive for exemplary corporate collaborative working and BIS strongly encouraged this to continue.
   - Once government had reduced/diminished its deficit over the next few years there may be more opportunity for BBSRC. BBSRC should be looking forward to prepare a bid for the ‘future’, demonstrating the great science and building on exemplary BBSRC behaviour/high-level competence.
   - BBSRC needs to be smart in their leadership and consider innovative ways to help shape GCRF.
ITEM 6: BBSRC DELIVERY PLAN (BBSRC 05/2016)

This section/paragraph is deemed OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE and has been therefore removed from the main body of the minutes

ITEM 7: INSTITUTE STRATEGY UPDATE (BBSRC 06/2016)

12. Paul Gemmill introduced this paper. At BBSRC Council in December 2015, Council agreed to the overall institute strategy including the revised aim of BBSRC strategically funded Institutes being a significant partner in shaping and delivering BBSRC’s vision of ensuring the power of biology will deliver a Healthy, Prosperous and Sustainable future

13. This paper provided an update on work with the Institutes since the December 2015 Council meeting, and proposed a revised approach post the Institute Assessment Exercise reflecting the wider change landscape for BBSRC.

14. Council AGREED the revised approach as set out in this paper, and requested an update in June 2016. Council commented that the wider landscape reviews should include an international component.

15. ACTION: BBSRC to provide an update on IAE progress and the wider landscape review at the June 2016 Council meeting.

ITEM 8: OUTCOME OF ANNUAL APPRAISAL (BBSRC 07/2016)

16. Paul Gemmill introduced this paper. This was a report of members' comments on the performance of Council over 2015. Out of 14 Council members invited to complete the survey, 12 members responded. The Chair, the Chief Executive and the BIS representative did not participate in the exercise.

17. The report shows a comparison against results received last year covering 2014. Overall Council continues to perform well with recognition that there was a period of transition with the appointment of the new Chair and the interim Chief Executive, which may have affected effectiveness slightly. A few concerns had been expressed in relation to the handling of conflicts of interests, which the Secretariat would examine.

18. AGREED that at the next Council meeting in Swindon if possible time should be allocated for Council members to spend the afternoon before the meeting with BBSRC Swindon colleagues. ACTION: BBSRC Council Secretariat to review arrangements for December Council meeting.
ITEM 9: COUNCIL SUCCESSION PLANNING (BBSRC 08/2016)

19. Paul Gemmill introduced this paper. At the December 2015 Council meeting the Acting Chair asked for a paper on Council succession planning for discussion at the next formal Council meeting. This provided an opportunity for Council to begin to articulate what it sees as its role/the role of its successor body in the future Research UK landscape.

20. There was agreement to maintain BBSRC Council members until April 2018 and BIS made clear its desire for continuity of membership post April 2018 especially given the excellence of BBSRC Council.

21. **ACTION: BBSRC to provide council succession planning updates annually at Council meetings.**

ITEM 10: IB PROGRESS REPORT (BBSRC 12/2016)

22. The Chair welcomed Colin Miles (Head of Science Strategy: Industrial Biotechnology & Bioenergy) to the meeting and invited him to introduce this item.

23. Council noted the content of the Progress Report 2016 and were satisfied with the overall progress made with the IB networks that directly link through to the IB catalyst funding mechanism. The networks are a very good mechanism for engaging with industry on this scale.

24. What can BBSRC do to continue to support this area and enable translation of the research?
   - Noted that changes to Innovate UK, structure, funding mechanisms and constraints on budget are likely to impact significantly on this area
   - IB falls under the Innovate UK manufacturing theme in the emerging new Innovate UK structure. BBSRC should ensure involvement, as a key partner, to help shape priority areas of calls.
   - Potential Innovate UK representation on BBSRC’s strategy advisory board
   - Explore other mechanisms for funding, not just in the UK but through European and US calls

25. Council raised the query of whether there was industry support (in place of catalysts) to fund pre-competitive research.

ITEM 11: MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

26. David Gregory (as Chair of BBSRC Audit Committee) reported on the last Audit Board meeting and updated on the following:
Attended a recent Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) meeting. Internal resource and an agreed tender were in place with five different auditing companies, allowing a choice of internal auditing.

Attended AASG Supervisory Board and discussed RCUK Operational Cost Reduction Programme (OCRP).

Attended National Audit Office meeting, topics discussed included cyber security. Oracle 12.0.6 has a very low resistance to cyber security that needs addressing.

ITEM 12: FINANCE REPORT

27. David Parfrey introduced this paper. This paper provided an update to Council on BBSRC’s financial position for 2015-16, the status of the audits for both BBSRC and the Research Councils Pension Schemes (RCPS), together with a general update on other Finance & Campus Operations Group activities. The Acting Chair agreed that the plans were routinely reviewed and discussed at Audit Committee.

28. BIS recognise that there is a clear need to fix the BBSRC Oracle 12.0.6. Hilary Reynolds was leading on this work. **ACTION: David Parfrey to make sure BBSRC is engaged to ensure a new system would be functional for grants and payroll/pension.**

29. The Chair acknowledged that BBSRC has an excellent finance team.

30. Key risks highlighted were the stability of UKSBS and OCRP demand on resource (BBSRC leads on three programmes).

31. Council APPROVED all BBSRC Audit plans as outlined in this paper.

ITEM 13: PAPER SEAL AND SIGNING AUTHORITY (BBSRC 13/2016)

32. David Parfrey introduced this paper. This paper asked Council to approve the updating of the list of authorised signatories able to authenticate the BBSRC Seal on relevant legal documents. The Royal Charter requires that one Council Member and one Executive Officer sign such documents, and following a number of changes in both Council and the Executive, it is appropriate to update the signatory list.

33. Council APPROVED the Members of Council and Executive Officers as Authenticating Signatories, with the removal of David Richardson and David Baulcombe.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ORAL)

34. No items raised under AOB.

Chief Executive’s Office